



Aethiopica 5 (2002)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

BAIRU TAFLA – VERONIKA SIX

Conference report

July 22–26, 2001 in Asmāra (Eritrea)
International Conference of Eritrean Studies

Aethiopica 5 (2002), 299–300

ISSN: 1430–1938

Published by

Universität Hamburg

Asien Afrika Institut, Abteilung Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik

**July 22–26, 2001 in Asmāra (Eritrea)
International Conference of Eritrean Studies**

The First International Conference of Eritrean Studies took place in Asmāra from 22–26 July, 2001. It was initiated and conducted by the Eritrean Studies Association (ESA) which has for years been holding a small-scale conference annually as a subsection of the regular African Studies convention in the U.S.

Among the major sponsors of the Asmāra conference were the Research and Documentation Center (RDC) of Eritrea and the University of Asmāra which also generously offered social and cultural evenings. Quite a few faculty members and students of the university also rendered valuable voluntary services to the conference.

A circular of the overall Planning and Coordination Committee indicates that the time and venue were chosen to commemorate “The Tenth Anniversary Of The Independence Of Eritrea” and that accordingly the theme was phrased as “Independent Eritrea: Lessons and Prospects”. But the topics were by no means limited to the recent developments. They ranged from prehistoric times to current issues. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the presentations on archaeological survey of the country and the recent excavations of prehistoric sites on the outskirts of the capital as well as the lively discourses on governance and politics in Eritrea, the status and the role of the media in the development and democratization of the nation as viewed then by the public, and the assessment of the writing and documentation of Eritrea’s past were among the highlights of the conference. A part of an afternoon session was devoted to visiting the prehistoric sites.

150 papers, related to almost all fields, were presented in a tight schedule stretching in time from 8–18 (and at times much later) hours throughout the week, and each was followed by a stimulating and mature discussion. They were grouped into the following thematic categories and conducted in three to four parallel sessions which was made possible by the first-class facilities of the Intercontinental Hotel: From Economic Survival to Sustainable Growth; The History of Eritrea: Past and Contemporary; Constitutional Democracy, Civil/Political Rights and Unity in the Context of Diversity; Inter-State Relations, Impact of Conflicts, and Regional Cooperation; Cultural, Artistic, Literary, Educational and Health Developments; Social Amenities in the Context of Gender and Other Diversities; and, Experiences and Challenges in Scientific and Technological Developments.

In addition, there was an illuminating report on the RDC’s activities which has been in the process of preserving cultural heritage by building up a national archive, registering monastic mss., encouraging research in the

Conferences

arts and humanities and fostering relations with academics and institutions of higher learning abroad. Two guided trips were also offered at the close of the conference: one to the Red Sea town of Massawa and the neighbouring islands, and the other to the historical sites of Qohayto and Mätära. The proceedings, which include most of the papers, were in the press at the time this report was written.

About 600 scholars (among them many internationally renowned ones) and other interested people, representing more than 20 countries from all the continents, attended the conference. Most astounding was the interest of the capital's civil service who thronged the halls late in the afternoons after they were done with their office hours. A survey conducted by the organizing committee at the end of the conference showed the interest of the overwhelming majority in the regular recurrence of the conference. The next one is scheduled for the summer of 2004; the exact date and place are expected to be announced in due course.

Bairu Tafla and Veronika Six

12.–14. Oktober 2001 in Essen (Deutschland):
7. Wissenschaftliche Tagung des Orbis Aethiopicus:
Die Erhaltung des äthiopischen Kulturerbes –
Verpflichtungen und Aufgaben
The Preservation of Ethiopia's Cultural Heritage –
Responsibilities and Assignments

Das in schöner Umgebung gelegene Kardinal-Hengsbach-Haus war Veranstaltungsort der diesjährigen Tagung. Es begrüßten die ca. 60 Teilnehmer die erste Bürgermeisterin von Essen Annette Jäger sowie Walter Raunig (München).

Als erstes wurde am Samstag in einer stillen Minute der äthiopischen Opfer vom 11. September gedacht.

Mit dem Thema "Endangered Objects of Art and the Role of Cultural Institutions" eröffnete Baye Yimam (Addis Abeba) die Vortragsreihe.

Anschließend zeigte David W. Phillipson Dias zum Thema "Lalibela: Research Priorities, Conservation and Management of Tourism".

Der Diavortrag von Stanislaw Chojnacki (Sudbury) "The Preservation of Ethiopia's Cultural Heritage – a Personal Perspective Spanning Forty Years" löste Begeisterung bei den Zuschauern aus.